

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01
TRSE-00 /098 W
-----020705 292144Z /63

R 281708Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2260
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION SINAI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PINS, IS
SUBJECT: CIVIL SERVICE UNIONS CALL OFF STRIKE

REF: TEL AVIV 4062

1. WITH ISRAELI TROOPS STILL IN LEBANON AND WITH PRIME MINISTER
BEGIN WARNING THAT THE COUNTRY IS THREATENED WITH INCREASING PRESSURE
FROM THE US, TRADE UNION LEADERS APPEAR TO BE TEMPORARILY COOLING
THEIR MILITANCY. CIVIL SERVICE UNION SEC. GENL. BERNSTEIN CALLED
OFF ONE DAY GENERAL CIVIL SERVICE STRIKE SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 28
ON THE ADVICE OF HISTADRUT AND FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SEVERAL
KEY PROFESSIONAL UNIONS AND WORKS COUNCILS IN SEVERAL MINISTRIES
THAT THEY WOULD NOT JOIN THE STRIKE. AT THE END OF HEATED ALL DAY
NEGOTIATIONS, BERNSTEIN AGREED TO ACCEPT A JOINT HISTADRUT-CIVIL
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SERVICE COMMITTEE TO NEGOTIATE ITS CLAIMS FOR RETROACTIVE PAY UNDER
THE CURRENT CONTRACT.

2. BOTH GOI AND HISTADRUT OFFICIALS CONSIDER THIS
AS LITTLE MORE THAN A TEMPORARY TRUCE, SINCE THE ISSUE DID NOT RELATE
TO THE NEW CONTRACTS. IN THE MEANTIME THE TEACHERS AND JOURNALISTS
PERSIST IN THEIR ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR STRIKING NEXT WEEK. OTHER

PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS ARE AWAITING COURT OR ARBITRATION DECISIONS REGARDING THEIR CLAIMS FOR BACK PAY OR SPECIAL SALARY ADJUSTMENTS UNDER THE CURRENT CONTRACTS. IN ADDITION THEY ARE ALSO FORMULATING THEIR DEMANDS FOR SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER WAGE INCREASES, RIGHTS TO PROMOTION, SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOWANCES, ETC., ALL IN EXCESS OF THE WAGE INCREASES ALREADY GRANTED UNDER THE NEW CONTRACT FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR CONCLUDED MARCH 24 (REFTEL).

3. THE GOI HAS REITERATED ITS OFFER OF A 6 PERCENT INCREASE FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR, WHICH CLEARLY IS NOT ITS LAST WORD. IN RETURN FOR ADDITIONAL WAGE INCREASES THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONER SEEKS TO EXTRACT CONCESSIONS FROM THE HISTADRUT AND THE CIVIL SERVICE UNIONS WHICH WOULD GIVE HIM A FREER HAND TO ABOLISH SUMMER HOURS; TO INTRODUCE FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS; TO SHIFT EMPLOYEES

BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS AND EVEN MINISTRIES WITHOUT INTERFERENCE; AND TO TRANSFER CERTAIN PROFESSIONAL GROUPS OUTSIDE THE CIVIL SERVICE SALARY SYSTEM IN ORDER TO AUTHORIZE HIGHER SALARIES MORE COMMENSURATE WITH THOSE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. ON ALL THESE ISSUES, AS WELL AS ON THE QUESTION OF SETTLING DISPUTES IN PUBLIC SERVICES AND OTHER VITAL SERVICES BY ARBITRATION, THE HISTADRUT AND THE UNIONS REMAIN AT SOME DISTANCE FROM THE GOI POSITION. EVERYONE AGREES THAT AS SOON AS THE PRESENT CONCERN OVER LEBANON AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS RELAXES, A NEW WAVE OF LABOR AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS WILL FLARE UP AGAIN. THE LABOR-ALIGNMENT SEES IN THESE CONFLICTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A POTENTIALLY MORE EFFECTIVE BASIS FOR CHALLENGING THE GOVERNMENT COALITION THAN IN A FRONTAL ATTACK ON BEGIN'S FOREIGN POLICY. THIS TACTIC -- USING LABOR ISSUES TO THREATEN THE GOVERNMENT -- WAS ADOPTED AT LAST WEEK'S MEETING OF THE LABOR PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE, ACCORDING TO PARTY AND HISTADRUT OFFICIAL NAVA ARAD. LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STRIKE SETTLEMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV04216
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780136-1058
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780316/aaaaanqz.tel
Line Count: 101
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fb2dfebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 TEL AVIV 4062
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3177496
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CIVIL SERVICE UNIONS CALL OFF STRIKE
TAGS: ELAB, PINS, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fb2dfebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014